

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 AID-05 OPR-02 A-01

SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 PC-01 /084 W

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O 221405Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4010

INFO/RUESGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY 5641

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSZSAN JOSE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

USCINSCO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3540

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: GOH CONCERN ABOUT SALVADORAN INTENTIONS

REF: A) TEGUCIGALPA 3511 (DTG 202035Z JULY 76), B) STATE 179290,

C) TEGUCIGALPA 3535 (DTG 212020Z JULY 76)

BEGIN SUMMARY: POLOFF CALLED ON THE SENIOR ADVISER OF THE FOREIGN
MINISTRY AND THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF ON JULY 21 TO DISCUSS
THE BORDER SITUATION. THEY ARE BOTH CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONTINUING
INTERCHANGES OF FIRE AND SURMISE THAT INTERNAL SALVADORAN INSTABILITY
MAY BE AT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM. THE GOH WANTS THE OAS TO SEND
AN INVESTIGATING COMMISSION OR OBSERVERS SO THAT THE PRESENT TENSE
SITUATION CAN BE CALMED, BUT DO NOT WANT THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE
OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES ACTING INDEPENDENTLY OF THE OAS.
A TELEGRAM WAS SENT TO THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN ON JULY 20 OUT-
LINING A GOH PROPOSAL FOR A RENEWAL OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR.
END SUMMARY.

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1. POLOFF VISITED POLICARPO CALLEJAS, SENIOR ADVISER TO THE FOREIGN

MINISTRY, ON MORNING OF JULY 21 TO DISCUSS RECENT HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR BORDER INCIDENTS. SUBSEQUENTLY, POLOFF HAD CONVERSATION WITH LT. COL. CESAR ELVIR SIERRA, ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, ABOUT SAME SUBJECT.

2. CALLEJAS SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN A SERIES OF CLASHES ON THE FRONTIER SINCE THE EVENING OF JULY 13; SOME OF THE INCIDENTS WERE MINOR BUT OTHERS INVOLVED A HEAVY EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE. HE COMMENTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN INTERCHANGE THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 20.

AS REPORTED REFTEL C, GOH SENT TELEGRAM TO COMMITTEE OF SEVEN DENOUNCING SALVADORAN ACTIONS AND ASKING FOR THE DISPATCH OF AN INVESTIGATING COMMISSION. CALLEJAS COMMENTED THAT THE GOH IS AWAITING THE COMMITTEE'S REPLY AND IS ANXIOUS TO HAVE OAS OBSERVERS ON HAND TO LESSEN THE CHANCES OF AN ESCALATION IN FIGHTING. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOH DESIRES AN OAS PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION RATHER THAN PUTTING THE SITUATION IN THE HANDS OF THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES. HE REMARKED GOH BELIEVES THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION MAY HAVE ARISEN AS A RESULT OF EL SALVADOR'S INTERNAL POLITICAL INSTABILITY (AGRARIAN REFORM TENSIONS, RODRIGUEZ' SCANDAL, ETC.) RATHER THAN AS PURELY MILITARY MOVES TO IMPROVE BORDER POSITIONS.

3. CALLEJAS SAID THAT FONMIN PALMA PLANNED TO PAY CALLS ON HIS COUNTERPARTS IN OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES DURING COMING WEEK TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF AND, AT THE SAME TIME, EXPLAIN THE GOH POSITION REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR. HE SAID A TELEGRAM WAS SENT TO THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN ON JULY 20 PRESENTING GOH VIEZI ABOUT A POSSIBLE NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK. CALLEJAS SAID THATCWE TELEGRAM SUGGESTED UTILIZATION OF THE DRAFT TREATY PRESENTED BY HONDURAS IN 1975 AND THE DRAFT TREATY RECENTLY PRESENTED BY EL SALVADOR AS WORKING DOCUMENTS TO FORM THE BASIS OF A RENEWED NEGOTIATION. HE REMARKED THAT THE GOH BELIEVES IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO APPOINT A MEDIATOR WHO COULD ACT AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE DISCUSSIONS AND WHO WOULD BE EMPOWERED TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESOLVE POINTS IN DISAGREEMENT (THE TELEGRAM TO THE OAS DID NOT MENTION A MEDIATOR). HE SAID THAT THE GOH WOULD BE PREPARED TO PRESENT A PROPOSAL TO THE GOES AT UPCOMING MEETING OF FONMINS PALMA AND BORGONOVO (SEE REFTEL A).

4. LT. COL. CESAR ELVIR SIERRA SAID HE IS CONCERNED THAT THE
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BORDER INCIDENTS MIGHT BE LINKED TO INTERNAL SALVADORAN POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES. HE REMARKED THAT THE SALVADORAN MILITARY WAS SHAKEN BY THE RODRIGUEZ SCANDAL AND THERE ARE DEEP DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ARMY. HE COMMENTED THAT THE SALVADORANS HAD BEEN LYING ABOUT THE HONDURAN USE OF ARTILLERY IN ZAZALAPA BECAUSE THERE ARE NOT EVEN ANY MORTARS IN THE AREA. ACCORDING TO ELVIR, PERSONAL INSPECTION BY HIGH RANKING HONDURAN OFFICERS OF THE AREAS WHERE THE EXCHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE (ZAZALAPA AND DOLORES) CONFIRMED THAT THE FIRING HAS

BEEN INITIATED BY THE SALVADORANS. HE SAID THAT ORDERS HAVE BEEN SW
ISSUED TO THE HONDURAN FORCES TO HOLD ALL THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS
BUT NOT TO ATTACK; IN ADDITION, THERE HAVE BEEN NO TROOP
REINFORCEMENTS SENT TO THE BORDER AREAS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE
SALVADORANS ARE BUILDING A ROAD INTO THE DOLORES AREA, A MOVE
GUARANTEED TO INCREASE HONDURAN SUSPICION OF SALVADORAN MOTIVES.

5. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD MEET WITH COL. ROJAS, THE SALVADORAN
CHIEF OF STAFF, AT EL AMATILLO ON JULY 23 TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL A
SALVADORAN PROPOSAL MADE THAT THE JULY 15 MEETING FOR A WITHDRAWAL
OF ALL TROOPS FROM THE DISPUTED AREAS (SEE REFTEL A). HE SAID
HE IS DUBIOUS ABOUT THE SALVADORAN DESIRE TO DEFINE PRECISELY THE
AREAS IN DISPUTE BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN UNWILLING TO DO SO IN THE
PAST.

6. BEGIN COMMENT: THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE GOH IS CONCERNED
ABOUT WHAT IT PERCEIVES AS A PREMEDITATED SALVADORAN PLAN TO PROVOKE
BORDER HOSTILITIES. HONDURAN LEADERS SEEM TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE
ACTIONS ARE A RESULT OF INTERNAL SALVADORAN INSTABILITY AND FEAR
THAT THE FIGHTING COULD ESCALATE. IN THAT REGARD, CALLEJAS MEN-
TIONED THAT THE GOH MIGHT CALL AT SOME FUTURE TIME FOR THE INTRO-
DUCTION OF AN INTER-AMERICAN PEACE FORCE ALONG THE BORDER IN THE
HONDURAN LEADERS BELIEVE A LARGE SCALE SALVADORAN ATTACK IS IMMINENT
AT THAT MOMENT. THE GOH BELIEVES THAT THE ARRIVAL OF AN INVESTIGATION
COMMISSION OR OAS OBSERVERS IS THE BEST WAY TO CALM THE SITUATION
AT THIS TIME; IT DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN
COUNTRIES WOULD BE ABLE TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE SITUATION.
END COMMENT.
BARTCH

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